

Homily For Tuesday of the First Week of Advent - Year I

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Dec 4, 2018

Isaiah 11: 1-10 " A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse."

Psalm 72 "Justice shall flourish ... and fullness of peace forever."

Luke 10: 21-24 "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see."

Introduction

A Utopia is a description of an ideal society that does not exist and, in fact, cannot exist. The word means 'no place'. A utopian idea is a way of expressing dissatisfaction with the way things are- a 'wouldn't it be nice if ... ' kind of scenario.

Utopias will contradict each other, depending on the perspective or ideology from which they come. That's why they can be socialist or capitalist, monarchical or democratic or anarchist, feminist or patriarchal, left wing or right wing, moral or free love, and on and on.

Utopias comes out of our human longing for something better. Unfortunately, that same longing, which is good in and of itself, often leads to anxiety and despair and bitterness and all of the problems we see.

Isaiah (The Lord saves)

The society Isaiah describes looks like it is coming out of some kind of utopian thinking. All peace and security, no predators or hostility. The difference is that Isaiah is the prophet of the God who gives us a share in his own Blessed life, which is the real perfection of humanity, which we do not have the capacity to see or create.

Isaiah lived a long time after David, the ideal king, and 700 years before the King of Kings, the one who is the perfection of all that David meant to Israel. He has witnessed the fall and utter destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians. In his prophetic role, Isaiah could see the same fate for the southern kingdom of Judah, ruled over by the descendents of David. The stump of Jesse looks like the end of David's line. It is an image of life cut down.

Isaiah is in the middle somewhere, tying the two ends together. One he knows about historically. The other he knows about prophetically. One hundred years before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, Isaiah predicts its demise, but also its restoration, and the deliverance of the people.

Hope in God's promise that David's line is not ended. David is called a man after God's own heart. A man after his own heart and seed will indeed ascend to the throne. God's own heart. God's own nature. That's Jesus. This is the segue from Isaiah to Luke.

Gospel

The real utopia, a contradiction in terms because it does exist, is the inner life of the Holy Trinity. It is the eternal exchange of love, from all eternity, between the Father and the Son. It is, far from being an unattainable product of human imagination, a love so real that it is the third person of that Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus rejoices and gives thanks to the father. Why is he rejoicing? First, because he experiences the fullness of unity with life and love itself. Second, Jesus exults in the working out of God's plan of sheer goodness, which is to make us share in his own blessed life, the life that Jesus experiences fully in his human nature.

When the seventy disciples come back from sharing the Good News of God's salvation, they are full of joy. They see the kingdom of love beginning to unfold. It is something they could not have envisioned in their limited human imaginations. And what is it that they can see, that kings and prophets could not? It is the unfolding of where all of history has been going. Not a utopia, but the true hope of salvation, which appeared to be a stump, which looked like it was cut down. It is a sight enlivened and enlightened by grace to bring life. Since the Son is no less perfect than the Father, he is uniquely qualified to reveal the inner life of the Trinity to the world.

Exposition

We prepare to celebrate again the coming of the Christ into the world, the one who is the fulfilment of every human longing, the shoot from the stump of Jesse. Left to our own devices, we can only dream of a humanly devised society of justice and peace and prosperity for all. But, with the eyes to see and the ears to hear, we can experience that joy no matter what is going on in the circumstances of our lives. This is what 2000 years of saints tell us. Poverty, illness, torture and martyrdom do not separate us from this joy. And, no real or imagined society of our own making can bring it about.

Call To Action

Every year, we seek to purify our souls by a new interior conversion. During this time, we have to make the first commandment a reality, to make God first in our lives. Do we love anything else more than God? I don't really want to hear this myself, but the reality is that if I don't pray every day, and make that a priority, then God is not first. If I confess that I just got too busy, as

if that is a legitimate excuse, someone can say to me, well did you make time to eat. Well, of course. Then you love food more than God. Did you watch TV? Yes, well you love TV more than God.

We need Jesus. Without him, we are not the same. Without him, all I am is ... well, ME. Without hope in him, the best we can do is utopia. With Jesus, the inner life of the Trinity becomes my joy. The stump of Jesse, which looked dead, becomes my joy.